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THE FIRST WHITE MEN IN NORTH WEST AMERICA



An Abbreviated Story

BY

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AVOIDING minor details, framing the story of the great Northwest in simple way, we offer especially to young people a continuous history of events and actors therein from the days of Cortez, whose tyrannical but enterprising rule over New Spain (Mexico) saw first attempts at acquisition of territory in this region for his King, not forgetting himself for, selfish, he had unbounded ambitions. The timidity of these Spanish rovers materially curtailed their efforts in way of exploration for to "New Spain" all northern waters were unknown, the Spanish mind in this superstitious age having vague ideas of whirlpools, monsters of the sea, hidden reefs which made progress of their cruising caravals and permanent settlement on coast of "missions" by zealous fathers, a very tardy accomplishment, for under different Viceroy's a period of two hundred and fifty years or more elapsed at end of which all Spain could show were a few "Haciendas" or Missions on southern coast of California.

Having but little historical interest, the visit of mere traders to the North West Coast about time of Kendrick and Gray's presence here, has been omitted and referring in a brief way only to those who discovered or accomplished something of note, we bring the story up to a comparatively recent date.

Cortez, the terrible, in his day, 1539, (Charles the First was King), sent "Ulloa"—in 1540 "Mendez" fitted out, then "Cabrillo," who named "San Diego and San Miguell." Cabrillo dying, his lieutenant,

Ferrelo, took charge, cruising as far north as Northern California. At this time Spain had no challenge from any civilized source on land or sea, from farthest northern point reached to Cape Horn. With a free hand to loot and enslave rich provinces, her marauding adventurers emptied into her voluptuous lap untold wealth, which, though saturated with tears and blood of subjugated tribes, enabled her to dominate Europe and monopolize the sea.

England and France were gradually becoming sea powers, their knights, chevaliers and daring spirits, with difficulty restrained by treaties from competing in this looting of the new world; finally in Elizabeth of England's reign, with no reproof from their sovereign, there appeared in the Pacific a class of daredevils who, bent on plunder, were really beginners of discovery which has marked the map of the world with Britain's name, spreading her naval and commercial power while Spain's began to decline. France also benefited by this decadence, but Spain hectored Europe until the destruction of her great "Armada" in 1688, gave notice to a cruel King of a new alignment of the nations, who asserting all prerogatives of sovereignty had power to enforce them. In 1550 the Spaniards had got as far north as what is now known as Humboldt Bay on the coast of Oregon. In 1578 England appeared in the person of the redoubtable but rather unscrupulous Captain Francis Drake in the ship "Golden Hind." Fitted out by his friend, "Sir Walter Raleigh," and associates, good "Queen Bess" perhaps taking a few shares (we can imagine Essex sinking to his knee presenting his Queen with the stock on

the point of a rapier and told to rise and tell her of this fierce subject who would dare Spanish resentment).

Captain Drake with a roving commission, under no restriction, a free lance of the seas, sailed to where Spaniards and booty were to be found; the one he cordially hated, the other found its way below decks, to be taken home where "Queen Bess" was most gracious, knighting him, who still in fighting mood, with "Blake" and others hung like wolves on the flanks of the storm-tossed "Armada," zealously contributing to its destruction.

In 1774 "Juan Perez" in the "Santiago" reached farthest north; in 1775 "Bruno Hecate" in the Santiago and "Sonora" landed and took possession of what is now known as "Point Greenville" and came near finding the river "Roc" (Columbia River), naming the inlet where they lay "Hecate Inlet"; afterwards the Sonora under "Quadra" got to latitude 58 north, circumnavigating what was later named "Quadra or Vancouver Island."

Captain James Cook, the famous English navigator, in 1778 came in his ship "Discovery" ~~with Lieutenant Broughton in a smaller vessel as a tender,~~ entering "Nootka Sound," which he named King George Sound but learning the Indian name it has ever since retained it—Nootka Sound.

Sent out by the British government, his instructions were to examine the coast from 45 degrees north to the Arctic Ocean. Prevented by bad weather from a close look at the coast at what is now known as Cape Flattery, the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound, was

thus debarred from the glory, we may say, of a rediscovery of these famous estuaries. On Captain Cook's death at the Sandwich Islands (named after Lord Sandwich) his ships, the "Resolution" and "Discovery" returned home, where his story given to the world in 1784 proved the great outlook and profit in the fur trade, caused James Hanna, an Englishman, to come here in 1785 from Macao on the coast of China; being probably the first white man to engage in the fur traffic. He came again in 1786 but found competition, for Captains "Lowrie" and "Gricon" were here and afterwards Captains "Mears" and "Tipping" under the East India flag. The name "Juan de Fuca" was saved from oblivion by an Englishman named "Barclay" in command of the ship "Imperial Eagle" under the flag of the Austrian East India Company. Barclay Sound is on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island.

Captain Mears, whom we have mentioned, came again in 1788 in the ships "Prince of Wales" and "Iphegenia," erected a stockade at Nootka and built a small sloop, naming her the "Northwest America."

The first discoveries of note after Captain Cook's time were under Captains "Portlock" and "Dixon" in 1785 and 1786, commanding two English traders, the "Princess Royal" and "Prince of Wales."

The people on the coast of New England had at this period a natural instinct for the sea, a predilection the government encouraged, soon placing our ships on every sea, our whalers where none dared follow.

Following out a most reasonable assumption, some Boston men in 1787 turned their gaze on Northwest America, for here were unknown lands with scattered barbarous occupants and here peradventure American occupancy might be made permanent.

With these dominating thoughts, it was a wise provision that supplied the ships with goods and trinkets to trade and use at times as presents. In 1787 the ship "Columbia" under "Captain John Kendrick" as head of the expedition, and the bark "Washington" under "Captain Robert Gray," with a friendly letter from the Spanish minister at Washington and God-speed from the people, made for the open ocean, beginning their long cruise, more fruitful in result directly and indirectly than any that has left American shores. The men who made this venture, apparently so costly, were nearly if not all, Boston men, and prominent citizens in their day.

Joseph Barrell, the leading merchant who in the Revolutionary war had re-victualled the French fleet at cost prices, showing a fervent patriotism; Charles Bulfinch, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, the first great architect; Pintard, Crowell and Hatch.

Actuated by patriotic motives, the orders to Kendrick and Gray show that not a few pelts or petty trading but acquisition of territory should be the great aim.

Captain Robert Gray in the Washington entered Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island on Sept. 16, 1787; some time later Captain John Kendrick in the ship Columbia joined him.

The ships cruised in every direction; Kendrick getting as far north as "Southeastern Alaska." These were apparently observation cruises, with incidental talks and trading with the natives, but heeding instructions, always alive to the surroundings, making soundings, examining harbors, etc.

Returning to Nootka, the captains exchanged ships. Here they found the British traders, "Iphigenia" and "Princess Royal," also a Spanish man-o'-war whose captain now and then gave a dinner to the American and English captains and was most gracious. After some days two other Spanish armed vessels arrived—another banquet was given, in the midst of which the Spanish captain, rising from his chair, informed the English captains that they and their crews were his prisoners—their ships held as prizes. "Captain Douglas" demurred, saying, you don't mention the Americans. He was told "his papers were bad" for they authorized taking and using Spanish property.

The Columbia under Gray, crossing the Pacific on the return to Boston, was the first American ship to circumnavigate the globe, arriving home in 1790.

This quarrel with the Spaniards at "Clayoquot" was primarily the cause of "Captain Vancouver's" presence here in 1792, coming to adjust and pacify conflicting interests.

As it was, Spain and Britain came near war; Captain Kendrick in the Washington remained on the coast, where his activities attracted much attention from seamen generally. Running into the harbor of Honolulu, a British ship intending to honor

him saluted; but, by mistake, one gun was shotted and the great sailor and some of his men were struck down; the Washington under the mate was afterwards lost.

The voyages of the two ships resulted in financial loss; too much indeed for even rich men of that period. Most of the stockholders withdrew, but "Charles Bulfinch" and another assuming the burden, refitted the ship, sending her again in 1792 with explicit instructions from Mr. Bulfinch, the principal owner, in regard to acquiring territory from coast tribes within certain degrees of latitude.

Arriving at Clayoquot, Gray built the sloop "Adventure" for better approaching shallow waters and on May 7, 1792, cruising south, entered and named "Bulfinch's," afterwards known as "Gray's Harbor," had a fight with natives, getting to sea on May 11; still moving south, with a brisk westerly wind approached river "Roc," where after a turmoil among the waters, sailed into and up for some miles, one of the great rivers of the world, giving it his ship's name—"Columbia"—spending some days in refitting, making observations, naming prominent points, then making for the open ocean, stood to the north for Nootka, when to the astonishment of both he met Vancouver.

Captain George Vancouver had been sent by the Admiralty in the ship Discovery and a smaller vessel under "Lieutenant Broughton" mainly on a diplomatic mission, but incidentally to scrutinize the coast and acquire territory; had passed the great river's mouth and raging bar, reporting it to his superiors as an "inconsequential" stream of

minor importance, but afterwards telling of meeting the Columbia and Gray's wonderful announcement of discovery and sailing into one of the great rivers of the world.

It must have been a bitter hour for the veteran —his lack of a little Yankee curiosity and insistence had lost his country one of the brightest jewels in her crown, for in the negotiations afterwards between the United States and Great Britain, the prior entry into and naming the river by Captain Gray (and that act only) was finally recognized as giving sovereign rights over all contiguous territory. As it was, the long diplomatic exchanges ensuing grew at times quite acrimonious.

Vancouver sent Broughton into the river afterwards but another had shown the way and to him forever all the glory of such accomplishment belongs.

Captain Gray in the Columbia, returning to Boston, a scheme of colonization was devised—settlers invited in prospectus printed in "English, French and German," to settle on the near 3,000 square miles of land acquired of the tribes, (the only owners) but nothing came of it.

We of this good year of 1915 find it hard to believe that for years our government looked upon this vast region with but a languid interest, as the debates at that times show, looking upon it as almost a useless asset, nothing but mountains, useless forests and unnavigable waters, almost ready indeed to disclaim ownership, and but for the historical trip to Washington city of the patriotic missionary, "Marcus Whitman," and intercession (al-

most prayers) of others who in after years had cast their lot here, opening the officials' eyes to the grand possibilities of the future, we might today be living under a foreign flag. Britain, better acquainted with the facts, the "Hudson Bay Company" to whom American occupancy threatened curtailment of their business, taking care to inform the home government in the premises, for a long time stubbornly refused to recognize our rights, the "Webster-Ashburton" treaty finally placing the boundary line as it exists today.

Long years after, a wealthy New York merchant, John Jacob Astor, sent a trading and fishing enterprise which occupied and named "Astoria" at the mouth of the Columbia River; the venture resulted in loss and after a fitful existence during which the fort was captured by an English warship, passed into the hands of the Hudson Bay Company, whose headquarters were then at Vancouver, further up the river, and by them discontinued and dismantled.

Captain Gray commanded a "privateer" in the war with England in 1812. He died in Charleston, S. C.; his contemporary, Vancouver, in England, the Hudson Bay Company erecting a monument to his memory.

The "Most worshipful Hudson Bay Company," to whom lifelong, arduous and at times most dangerous service was given for a mere pittance in way of remuneration, had as one of its founders a prince of the blood, "Prince Rupert," and to that fact perhaps may be ascribed its fortune in getting a one-hundred-year lease or charter from the crown, con-

veying all rights of sovereignty, in fact full military and civic power. A remarkable phase of the company's story is the zeal and loyalty given to its service by employees, who often in remote savage surroundings spent the best years of their lives, their brown locks tinged with gray before a tardy promotion giving the status and position with perhaps a few shares of company stock and a location nearer civilization, but "always a Hudson Bay man." Mostly Scotch, they brought their youth and hardy honesty of their fathers, patience and industry and above all a high regard—almost a reverence—for the company's authority.

Only one American—"Captain McNeil" of Boston—ever took service in the Hudson Bay Co. Coming to the Coast in his brig "Llama" (if we mistake not), making such inroads into company's trade that his vessel, and furs were taken over by them, he probably accepting some "company stock" and becoming a "chief factor"—a term of rank, 'twould seem, for subordinates do the trading, but a "chief trader" in command of some far away post has supreme authority—his word is law. It's a great position, the highest in an employee's estimation.

We speak of this great organization, as its existence here before any other, except a nomadic trader occasionally, formed a part of local story and at times a factor of political importance.

In 1670 the company got its Charter giving control of all northern America not directly under any governmental supervision. A Montreal trading firm known as the "North West Co." was the first to

make permanent settlement on Western side of Rocky Mountains in which is now British Columbia, at "Fort St. James" near "Stewart Lake." Merging afterwards with Hudson Bay Co. greatly expanded its operations under name of the more powerful and privileged company, whose enormous profits, averaging at times sixty or seventy per cent, aroused competition, bringing unscrupulous methods in intercourse with natives, the liquor traffic the most objectionable. The company surrendered a later grant of 1821, getting a new crown grant May 30, 1838, giving exclusive rights mentioned.

For years prior to conclusion of the "Webster-Ashburton" treaty placing the international boundary on June 15, 1846, on the 49° parallel, the Hudson Bay Company had conducted its business from its six posts on the coast and sixteen in the interior, Fort Vancouver on the Columbia their main base. Pending negotiation of the treaty, the company fearing all posts and property south of 49° parallel might be given up, concluded to anticipate diplomacy by removing to a base on undisputed British soil. So Dr. John McLaughlin, then administrative head of the company at Vancouver, (another and last of company's holdings at Nisqually on the Sound) directed the transfer to "Camosin," now Victoria, on Vancouver Island, and here, in the now beautiful city, Rhoderick Finlayson in the early '40's erected a stockade which was their principal base, and here two ships would come yearly with all necessities required in their business, returning to London with rich cargoes trapped in the far away fastnesses and wilds, carried in batteaux

through whirling torrents or portaged on men's backs.

An American trapping and trading company with St. Louis as its base, alive to great profits in the business, began sending its hunters towards the Rocky Mountains, the great grassy expanses covered by browsing buffalo, antelope and other game, offered a wide field for hardy spirits employed, at time sanguinary encounters occurring between employees of rival companies. The hunters finally descending the western slope became occasionally permanent settlers of the rich valley lands of the Columbia, their descendants living there to this day.

The discovery of gold on Fraser river in 1858 (much to the company's disgust) bringing a horde of western men and miners to Victoria, which in a few days became a city (of shacks mostly) of ten or twelve thousand ever-moving, restless adventurers, attracted by that magic (and cruel) word "Gold."

They came from San Francisco in everything that would float and much that wouldn't, making the coast line from Point Reyes to Cape Flattery a marine graveyard. Nothing justified this rush, for "Cariboo," "Cassiar" and other rich districts developed later.

Along in the fifties Americans from California, Oregon and now and then a wandering Missourian coming overland, built his cabin on Puget Sound as near as might be to clams and salmon, and chopping a hole in the forest, planted his potatoes, if pious perhaps thanking Heaven that he was per-

mitted to live among the beautitudes and feel gloriously independent under his own vine and fir tree. The beginning made, in short time scattering hamlets appeared and from this primitive era when trolling for a salmon was a serious business, if unsuccessful mayhap no dinner, we actually ride in street cars, autos, yes and aeroplanes, taking Bankers' conventions and other great and good things with much nonchalance (they've got to come here), wondering how things are in Europe, and on the Rio Grande, ready to fill all orders (C. O. D.) from shrapnel to a hospital nurse.

The settlement and rapid development of the northwest, the land of "Kendrick and Gray," is a story that filled with minor but most interesting detail, would be fascinating, at times bordering on the romantic, and strange it is that its relation excites so little interest, each passing year placing us farther away from historic data that every school boy or girl should be able to recall.

The ending of this abbreviated narrative will not be garnished with apologies for errors therein—we make mistakes just like, and almost as frequent as, other folks, but under rather adverse conditions, have tried in a way to repeat the main points of the story.

Respectfully,

J. T. A. BULFINCH.

The Discovery of the River "Roc"

(The Columbia)

Obeying instructions to keep together,
 If possible, in all kinds of weather,
 The ships were never so far away
 That "Kendrick" could not signal "Gray."
 Until the continent's stormy lip
 And southwest storms compelled each ship
 To brace "close hauled" in the heavy weather
 No longer to sail together,
 A wide "offing" of the stormy cape
 To "port" sharp braced they tried to make,
 The Penguins mournful cry,
 The only sound that life was nigh.

Turning her bows to the north at last,
 The "Washington" 'got the gale well aft.
 Up to "the line" she bravely drew
 Still to the north like a bird she flew,
 In good time, entered "Nootka's Sound,"
 And anchoring, held to historic ground;
 A Spanish "man o' war" she found.
 The Spanish King claimed all the land,
 Though France and England made demand
 That it was subject to discovery
 By any power that sailed the sea.
 Captain John Kendrick in the swirling storm
 Was battered cruelly off the "Horn,"
 Losing spars and many sails
 As the "Columbia" beat against the gales.

Finally sailed for "Crusoe's Isles,"
The Spanish Commandant with many smiles
Extending all hospitality he knew
To the half wrecked ship and her gallant crew,
Who, cheering "Lieutenant Gonzalez,"
Headed for "Nootka" before the breeze.
Though pursued by two men-o'-war
The jealous Viceroy had ordered there,
As also Gonzalez was ordered sent
In irons to Spain for punishment,
For all the land and fringing seas
Belonged to their Spanish Majesties.
England and France laughed to scorn,
(The infant Republic was not strong)
Spain sought to drive her from the Western seas,
The bluff was vapid and didn't please
The rising young democracy,
Who wished the freedom of the seas,
Scoffed at the words from the Spanish throne
That claimed territory it did not own.

The Columbia soon found her mate,
The Washington, which lay sedate
Near the "Princess Royal" and "Iphigenia,"
Two Englishmen on trading bent.
The Columbia and Washington in duty bound,
Cruised the coast for bay or sound,
Having a skirmish occasionally
With treacherous natives who jealously,
Watching the small boats as they passed
From ship to shore until at last,
In war canoes they paddled out
With bows and arrows and battle shout;

For a "Kanaka" member of Columbia's crew
Agreed with the chiefs just what to do:
He'd drown the vent of each carronade
With vinegar when the attack was made,
But detected in the murderous scheme
His body was swung up limp and lean
To the mainyard for treachery.
And there it swayed 'twixt sea and sky.
A blank charge was fired o'er
The retreating canoes that made for shore.
Next day the chiefs a treaty made,
For greatly fearing a Carronade
They wanted peace and with it trade.

The "Washington Islands"—by Kendrick named,
Though England after, a royal name—
"Queen Charlotte" stamped upon the map
Was where Kendrick had a scrap,
Losing a few of his gallant tars,
But made the "Haidahs" sick of wars,
Proceeded on his cruise northerly,
His great ambition discovery.
After many days, returning south,
Meeting his consort at Nootka's mouth,
Directed the Columbia under Gray
To cross the "Pacific for Boston Bay."

Doubling "Good Hope" in the night
Though "Table Mountain" was in sight,
"St. Helena" soon left behind
Where afterwards ambition pined.
With straining braces through feathery foam,
With wind "dead aft" they were nearing home,

Past "Governors Island" armed height
In Boston's harbor they anchored tight.
The first American that ever swirled
The stars and stripes around the world.

Her long cruise, bereft of gain,
The ship was fitted out again
Gray in the Columbia in 1792
Again bade New England's coast adieu,
Giving "the course" his mind intent
On the far northwest of the continent.
Little thought he as the placid sea
Laved the ship's sides timidly,
That this voyage should give to fame,
The "Columbias" banded with his name.
The fairest land with cities yet to be,
With iron roads from sea to sea,
Binding rich commonwealths between
Surpassing the most patriotic dream.
To the Republic, a peerless heritage
The grandest empire of any age.
Over all the stars and stripes should wave,
'Till liberty lay in a forgotten grave.

Condemned the English traders were
By the Spanish captain of the man-o'-war,
Their papers giving right to seize
Spanish property on the seas;
He held their crews as prisoners,
Until from Madrid he should hear.
Quick then Britain sent "Vancouver"
To dissipate a threatened war,
In the "Discovery" Vancouver came,

Passing the great river, which yet unnamed
He called an "inconsequential" stream
And saying so, his King and Queen
Lost the grandest realm on earth
Since Creation had its birth
Smirching the glory of his great career
He passed the grand river with a sneer.

Meanwhile Gray, a second time,
Had stood close in to the river "Roc"
Which the Spanish named but dared not face the
shock.

The turbulence that they saw there
Meant shipwreck in the watery war.
But Gray, the wind straining every sail,
Stood "straight for the bar" before the gale
After a struggle in the seething swirl
Entered the great river of the western world
Gave it his ship's name, Columbia.
Sealing the glory of his discovery.
Giving to Columbia her brightest star,
(Though diplomatic quibbles almost led to war)
Britain finally had to recognize
The Yankee's dare-devil enterprise,
Thus giving the republic an empire here
That on this ocean had no peer.

Leaving the river with freshning gales,
Gray looked in vain for Kendrick's sails
But saw Vancouver speeding in
Towards the great island named for him.
Slowly the Columbia stately rose
From the ocean's curves, as if to pose,

Fired a gun and raised her colors then
(A flag held dear by patriotic men).

Vancouver, "Lieutenant Puget" sent
To ascertain what such ceremony meant,
Returning, with grave face, brought away
Rough charts that proved infallibly
The glorious story as told by Gray.
Easy for all now to recognize
The chiefs chagrin and ill concealed surprise;
To the great sailor perhaps a shock
For Gray had sailed up the river "Roc,"
Had given a name of glorious memories,
And Columbia's sovereignty from sea to sea.

What shall be said of those Boston men
Who owned the ships and placed their hopes in
them,
Pictured in their minds, they saw the day
When "Westward the star of Empire should take
its way,"
Cities should rise where towering forests lean
Photographed in shade or mountain stream
Over all, flaunting in the sun,
"Old Glory" in proof their work was done.
Hallowed be the names of these consignors true
Who conceived the voyages to regions then all new,
Who placed their hopes with no thought of gain
Which gave the nation this grand domain.
Their names seldom uttered, but little known,
The simple dignity of a marble stone
Tells where they lay in New England far away,
Their country got all they won,
But their work will stay.

Captain John Kendrick in the Washington
In the Pacific a great name had won,
Had scrutinized the coast to "Stekin's" mouth,
Then stood away for "Sandwich Islands" in the
South,

Entering "Honolulu Harbor," and swung—
At anchor—firing a saluting gun,
An English man-o'-war in compliment
Saluted Kendrick (it was well meant)
But one gun, shotted, a calamity befell;
Captain Kendrick and two seamen fell,
Ordered by fate, though at what a cost,
These sailors' souls took the "Ratlins for aloft"
From whose azure depths, perhaps dreamily
They trace out former paths upon earth's swelling
sea

In wild lands their wandering feet had trod
Are great cities' spires pointing up to God
All accessories great populations give
That help mankind to think, to act, to live,
Where children with enthusiastic pride
Salute the flag for which brave men died,
Remembering it is to them,
When grown to womanhood and men,
To love and protect with not a spot
Of treachery on its folds a blot
Over all, everlastingly to be
Liberty's emblem—pure and infallibly.

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